

Presented by Rev. H. B. Burdette
1815

THE
ENLARGEMENT
OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM,
THE OBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN'S
PRAYERS AND EXERTIONS.

A
DISCOURSE,
DELIVERED IN THE DUTCH CHURCH,
IN ALBANY;
BEFORE THE
NORTHERN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
IN THE STATE OF NEW-YORK,
AT THEIR ORGANIZATION,
FEB. 14, 1797.

By JOHN BLAIR SMITH, D. D.
PRESIDENT OF UNION-COLLEGE, AT SCHENECTADY.

SCHENECTADY:
PRINTED BY C. P. WICKOFF, IN STATE-STREET.

1797.

*At a meeting of the Northern Missionary Society in
the State of New-York, at Albany, Feb. 14, 1797.*

RESOLVED, that the thanks of this Society be given to the Reverend John B. Smith, President of Union College, for his excellent Sermon delivered at the organization of the Society, and that a copy be requested for publication.

Extract from the Minutes,

JOHN BASSETT, Secretary.

TO THE
NORTHERN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

IN THE STATE OF NEW-YORK,

The following Discourse

DELIVERED AND PUBLISHED

AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS, WITH GREAT RESPECT DEDICATED

By

The AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE substance of the following Discourse was delivered at the organization of the Northern Missionary Society in the state of New-York, and is now submitted to the perusal and candor of the public. The Author, unacquainted to the publication of his thoughts in this manner, has complied, with great reluctance, to comply with the request of his friends upon the present occasion.

The subject, indeed, is sufficiently important to demand repeated attention from Christians; and it was certainly suited to the design of the meeting at which it was handled; but it is so familiar and common, that it was not presumed, it could now be clothed with such appendages, as would render it remarkably interesting in the perusal. On this ground principally, the Author was diffident in committing to the press, what was intended only for a single hearing on a particular occasion. However, he has been induced to resign the disposal of it, to the judgment of the Society, whose piety and zeal, no doubt, have inclined them to hope, that even common topics and arguments on such a subject, might be useful to the mass of readers.

When the discourse was delivered, the author had composed nothing more than short notes of its principal parts; and having been prevented from writing more fully for several months afterwards, by sickness, extreme debility, and numerous indispensable engagements, he hopes to be excused for any defects. Whatever slight variations may be perceived with regard to the present illustrations of the subject when compared with the discourse as it was preached, he can assure the reader, that the substance of that discourse, as far as it was penned, or could be afterwards recollected, is now given to the public.

The whole is committed to the blessing of God, and recommended to the prayers of the pious.

Schenectady, July 1, 1797.

A

DISCOURSE, &c

MATH. vi. 10.—Thy kingdom come!

CHRISTIANS regard the object of this petition as a matter of the highest importance. It is their ardent desire, that the divine authority and dominion may be perceived and acknowledged throughout the Universe; that the kingdom of God may be visibly and extensively promoted. But, especially, their regard for the glory of their Lord and Savior induces them to pray, that the peculiar dispensation of the kingdom of grace which he has introduced amongst rebellious men, may have an unobstructed progress. They perceive that, in this way, the divine character will be most remarkably displayed; the divine sovereignty will be most effectually maintained and promoted; and the order and happiness of the creation be best secured. Hence their Christian zeal and philanthropy prompt them to an earnest solicitude with regard to this great object, which excites both their prayers and correspondent exertions, to secure it; to obtain the increase and stability of the Redeemer's

kingdom. In this petition, therefore, which forms a part of that model of prayer, prescribed by our Savior to his disciples, the divine teacher combines, both, the duty and the inclination of his people ; and commands them to pray for that, which is habitually the first and dearest wish of their heart.

Altho' this injunction of our Lord was addressed to his immediate disciples ; and had perhaps a peculiar reference to the interest which it became them to take, with regard to the introduction of that spiritual kingdom which had been early predicted, and of which the establishment was expected under the Messiah ; yet we may fairly presume that it has a more general intention. The analogy of the case sufficiently shews, that it embraces, within its direction, Christians in all succeeding periods, and alludes to the concern which they ought to feel for the enlargement of his Church, until the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of God, and of his Christ. In this view, therefore, the command of Christ extends to us also, my Brethren ; and it is our indispensable duty, to promote, with earnestness and zeal, the visible advancement of his kingdom amongst mankind. That you regard it in this light and have felt the force of the injunction, the appointment of the present solemn convention of various denominations of Christians, and of the present exercise, is a strong indication.

As it is to be presumed, that a pious disposition to glorify God, and to see the blessed dominion of Jesus Christ over the human heart widely diffused, has produced the desirable coalition

and concert which we perceive, I cannot doubt of the serious attention of this assembly to the subject of present discussion, which has an immediate relation to these great objects.

It is no part of my design on the present occasion, to explain the general principles of that concise and comprehensive form of prayer, from which I have selected the text : nor to enlarge upon the connection and circumstances of our Lord's discourse to his Disciples when he gave them this directory. Neither will I now stand to enquire, whether Christians, at this period of the Church, can use it precisely in the same sense, and with the same reference as the Apostles ; nor whether they ought to conceive themselves obliged to consider it as a stated form in their customary acts of devotion*.

Confining our attention singly, therefore, to that important object which the words of the text present to our contemplation, I propose in the illustration of it,

I. To shew what is implied in this petition.

II. To suggest some considerations which ought to engage us habitually in the use of it.

III. Point out those measures which will best demonstrate our sincerity in that practice.

B

* Perhaps the omission of that capital circumstance of Christian prayer, the asking in the name of Jesus himself, which was afterwards prescribed, is a sufficient intimation of our general duty upon this point.

I. It is proposed to shew what is implied in this petition.

The general object of request is the advancement of the kingdom of God.

This phrase in its primary and most extended sense, denotes that universal dominion of God which embraces all ranks of being and pervades all space. The kingdom of God, in this view, has been established from the beginning, with incontrollable superiority and glorious sovereignty; and it has been uniformly administered with such consummate wisdom, as to cause every part of the complicated machine to fulfil, eventually, his vast designs. It is not, therefore, the special object proposed in the text, under the denomination of the kingdom of God the coming of which was to be sought by prayer.

But the words of the petition have a more immediate reference to that peculiar dispensation of grace and mercy which Jesus Christ introduced amongst mankind, and which was intended to reduce them, from a state of rebellion, to a cordial submission to the divine will and management, and rule. This is frequently called the kingdom of God, in the Scriptures; and comprehends the whole plan and administration of Christ's mediatorial office, from its commencement to its consummation. It is the empire of Jesus Christ over the heart of converted sinners; and is, therefore, expressly denominated the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who being supreme in the administration of the gracious purposes of the Deity, with re-

gard to fallen man, is stiled King in Zion, and sustains the character both of a Savior, and a Prince.

This is a spiritual kingdom, more restricted in its nature and extent, and more uniform in its appearance, than the Universal Government of God which has been noticed. The subjects under its special administration and protection; consist of reclaimed sinners; of rebellious foes subdued, by unspeakable grace, and made cordial friends and willing servants of their adored Lord. United into a holy community by the bands of a common faith and love, they are governed on peculiar principles of purity and holiness, righteousness, peace, and happiness. Their immunities, blessings, and privileges are most ample and desirable; and these are enlarged and secured with glorious advantages to eternity.

In a word, the kingdom of God, to which the text refers, is that mediatorial administration, which was received by delegation,* and which has the promise of a successful establishment and universal prevalence amongst all nations of the globe,† until after a full accomplishment of all its purposes, it shall be terminated by a surrender to the eternal father, and blended with the general Government of God over all holy beings‡.

To this pecu'iar kingdom of grace, in all its connexions and consequences, our Savior allud-

* Matt: xxvii. 18. † Dan: vii. 13. 14.

‡ 1 Cor: xv. 24, 28.

ed, when he taught his disciples to pray for its prosperity. From the short-illustration of its general nature and character, which has now been given we may easily perceive what is implied in the petition for its coming or prevalence in the world.

1. It is obvious, that it can mean nothing less than, that this divine dispensation may have its full effect upon every human heart; that it may be cordially received and be diffused throughout the world. When we pray "thy kingdom come," we express an earnest desire, that the word of truth, or the preaching of the Gospel which is called the rod of God's power*; may, through the Almighty energy of the invincible spirit of the Lord, subdue the proud, revolting soul of man, and reduce myriads of opposing sinners, in every nation of the habitable globe to the obedience of faith, and a happy participation of the privileges of Christ's people: "We pray that the kingdom of Christ may be advanced."

It is most evident that the dominion of Jesus Christ which, according to the divine promise, is intended to be very extensive; has hitherto obtained but a partial establishment. My hearers will at once recollect immense regions and a prodigious population where our blessed Lord and his Gospel are never named, or named only for the purpose of scorn and insult: where his holy and self-denying system, humiliating to human pride; and hostile to human corruption,

is rejected with abhorrence by those ignorant, ferocious or voluptuous children of darkness.

But beside the millions of the human race who are professed Infidels, they will also recollect with pain, that there are millions more, who are only nominal subjects of our Lord, whilst in principle and practice they are utterly opposed to the Holy Constitution which he has ordained. How numerous are the Churches, called Christian, which have introduced and cherished such abominable corruptions of the religion of Jesus; as have changed its very nature; and have forsaken the Scriptures for the traditions of men! What numbers also belong to those pernicious and increasing sects which have renounced the fundamental articles of the Gospel! Unhappy errorists! who pretend to the Christian name, whilst they deny the most important principles which distinguish their profession; and, who falsely boast of superior science, whilst they resort to a pretended philosophy as their guide instead of the Scriptures of truth!

But even amongst those who profess to regard the sacred Scriptures as the only standard of religious truth, and to derive their principles wholly from that source, how few are there who appear to embrace the Gospel in its native simplicity, and to act habitually under its influence! What a scanty remnant receive, even in profession, its unadulterated doctrines; much less bear an open testimony to their importance! And, alas!, how much smaller still is the number, amongst all denominations of Christians, who appear to possess the Scriptural Characters

of the real subjects and members of Christ's kingdom! There are comparatively few, indeed, who have experienced the Savior's power changing their hearts into his own likeness; who are united to him by a living faith; who yield a chearful obedience to his will and divine institutions, in their true Spirit and design; who conscientiously submit to his discipline; and live to his glory!

When we reflect upon these circumstances, we perceive that Christ's real followers, are still but a little flock. • For "the kingdom of God consists not in word only but in power also"*; not in a mere formal profession or acknowledgement of Christ as Lord, but in knowing and chearfully performing his will†. It is evident, therefore, that the prayer of the petition for the coming of Christ's kingdom implies an earnest desire, that the plain, the powerful, the practical truths which the Gospel reveals, may universally prevail; may produce their intended effects. It implies, that we ardently solicit the Almighty Spirit, who is the great agent in the establishment of the empire of Jesus Christ in the hearts of men, to accomplish his effectual work in the most extensive manner: to impress a general conviction not only of the divine Authority of the Gospel, but of the importance of those pure doctrines which are essential to its constitution; to "take of the things of Christ, and shew them in all their consistent beauty to the view of the mind: to "work the work of faith with power":

* 1 Cor: iv. 20. † Mat: vii. 21.

to exhibit the nature, offices, relations and glory of Christ in his character of the Savior, in such a manner as effectually to induce multitudes to accept his grace, and submit to his gentle sway ; to create the world anew in Christ Jesus ; moulding men into his image and forming them after his pure example ; to send forth the officers of this spiritual kingdom so qualified as that they shall be holy, able and faithful men ; animated by an ardent, tho' prudent zeal ; " determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified" ; adhering to the simple doctrines of the Gospel, unadulterated by foreign mixtures ; " not preaching themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord" ; exhibiting a venerable pattern of spirituality, and evangelical purity ; and preserving impartial strictness in discipline and government : in a word, to engage all mankind to become Christians ; such Christians, I mean, as will maintain a conversation becoming the Gospel, as will " deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in the present evil world looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ*".

Thus in praying for the advancement of Christ's kingdom the mind ought to grasp its spiritual and true nature, and ardently desire its universal establishment in every human heart, that " all flesh may see the Salvation of God."

2. In seeking this great and desirable object it is also plainly implied, that we earnestly pray

for the removal of all those impediments which obstruct the progress of the pure Gospel.

The prejudices of Infidels are amongst the principal of these obstacles. Their pride opposes the humiliating lessons which the Gospel enjoins ; it will not submit the high pretensions of corrupted reason, to the revealed authority of God himself. Their licentious passions, are kindled into rage against a system so pure as to condemn impurity, even, of thought or desire. Both united, become the occasion of the most inveterate opposition against that kingdom of righteousness which is hostile to every principle of corrupt nature. These malignant principles not only excite in the breast of an Infidel the most rancorous hate, but prompt him to diffuse the most wicked prejudices against its authority and influence, into the minds of others. Hence, the gross misrepresentations of Christianity which have been obtruded upon the world ; hence too it has so often happened, that invective has been substituted for argument and that raillery has been employed instead of solid reasoning, on the most serious subjects. By such unworthy means, the effect of detestable prejudices, which cannot be sufficiently deplored, the principles of thousands have been corrupted and the progress of Christ's kingdom impeded.

The enormous fictions of superstition also ; the pompous hierarchies which have been fastidiously erected in the Christian Church ; and the tyrannical impositions of ecclesiastical establishments, have considerably obstructed the increase

of real religion in the world. These give an odious caricature of the system which Christ ordained; they change the ground of genuine faith and religious practice; and they shackle that spiritual liberty wherewith our Lord has made his people free. Where these prevail, the simplicity of the Gospel is lost or obscured; the power of God'iness is usually denied; and the reasonable discharge of duty, from choice and delight, which is essential to Christianity, is almost unknown. It is obvious, therefore, that whilst these impediments remain, the success of the Gospel cannot be great.

Again, the imperfections, the weakness, or the carnality of the officers and private members of the kingdom of Christ, prove a greater obstacle to its triumphant progress, than all the reasonings, the ridicule, the sophisms, or bitter invectives of avowed Unbelievers. The religion of Jesus is not merely an admirable speculation, but was intended to produce a practical, ameliorating, moral effect upon those who embrace it. Any thing, therefore, which contradicts this idea, gives a deep wound to its influence upon the world. The majority of corrupt minds possess neither sufficient discernment nor candor to distinguish between the Christian system as delineated by its holy author, and that distorted exhibition of it which is seen too often in the lives of its ministers and other professed members. For this reason, the disgusting formality and negligence of many of these characters; their ungodly and antichristian tempers and conduct; their animosities and selfish divisions; their unsteadiness,

their imprudence, their want of spirituality and disinterested zeal for the cause of Christ, create such a general suspicion, in the world, to the disadvantage of vital Christianity, as to harden multitudes in a state of disaffection to our glorious Lord, and render the means of conviction comparatively ineffectual.

Under a full impression of these lamentable truths the prayer of the text implies a deep concern for the removal of all these obstructions; "that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed"; that every opposition being checked or abolished, the Gospel may have a free course and be glorified*; and "that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea†".

Again, as our blessed Lord will not be perfectly glorified on earth in any state of his Church; and as his people will not be intirely happy, 'till they be united in that pure Assembly of the Spirits of the just made perfect which he assembles round the throne; the prayer of the petition may imply,

3. In the last place, an ardent desire to see the kingdom of grace consummated in the kingdom of Glory. It may imply the anxiety of a Christian's soul to see his divine master in all his glory forever; to be delivered from every imperfection by a full conformity to his living head; and to be brought as the ransomed of the Lord to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon his

* 1 Thess: iii. 1.

† If: II. xi.

head ; when he shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away".*

I have not particularly noticed, as a distinct object of this petition, the increase and enlargement of what is commonly called the visible Church, with its apparatus of Officers and provision for administering the ordinances ; because so far as this is valuable, it will always correspond in extent with that Spiritual kingdom which has been described ; and where it is supposed to exist without this exact correspondence, it is rather a nuisance than a benefit. The visible Church of Christ, ought to be, from the very terms, a plain and obvious representation of his kingdom in the soul and conducted according to the simple pattern contained in his word. Is it not merely the having a form of worship and religious order, where the doctrines of the Gospel may be a subject of careless, general speculation, or the Ordinances be loosely administered ; nor is it the union of professors of Christ's name in religious communities for maintaining the external institutions of Christianity, that will constitute a proper visible Church ; but it is the conducting of these external circumstances in such a manner as to be happy indications of the power and presence of

* *Is. xxxv. 10.* The weakness or the absence of faith may cause men to cleave to this imperfect and unhappy state of existence, and to fear a change into a future state as the worst of evils ; but a lively Christian under the clear discoveries of faith, will cry, " Come Lord, Jesus, come quickly " : " I desire to depart and to be with Christ."

Christ with his ordinances and people. To regard any other exhibition of our Savior's subjects and Institutions, as the visible Church, is a palpable mistake ; it might rather be called a visible opposition to the Spirit of the Gospel, to the cause of religion, to the kingdom of Christ. We are concerned to pray for the increase of the visible and external appendages of Christianity only so far as they will be a just representation to all the world, of what Jesus Christ has ordained and of that supreme dominion which he has established in the hearts of his people. Nothing but this exact correspondence of real Christianity in the soul, with its visible profession can sufficiently obviate the odious charge of hypocrisy and insincerity. Nothing but this is suitable to the pure and holy character of Christ and his heavenly system. Nothing but this will save him from being deeply wounded in the house of his friends ; or from being charged as the Minister of sin. Finally, nothing but this will impress conviction upon the minds, of an observing, but, unbelieving world, or extort a confession from their lips of the excellency of the Gospel, and bear down all opposition.

The general prevalence of those inward spiritual impressions and dispositions which have been noticed as the effect of Christ's dominion in the souls of men ; and the external regulation and administration of the Church in conformity with these, is that coming, or advancement of his kingdom to which our Savior alludes in this petition. This is that efficacious heaven which will eventually penetrate the whole mass

of men on earth, in the latter days. This is that powerful dominion which casts down every high thought and lofty imagination, and brings proud rebels, like little children, to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of him ; to take his cross ; to submit to his yoke. This is that stone cut out of the mountain without hands which, according to the declaration of a prophet, “ shall never be destroyed ” ; but, “ shall fill the whole earth and stand forever ”. For the coming of this kingdom we are taught to pray ; and for its successful progress and triumphant manifestation every pious heart will ejaculate a hearty Amen.

II. To suggest some considerations which ought to engage us habitually in the use of this petition, was the second General Division of the subject.

I. The glory of that exalted Lord whom we serve ; and the honor of his divine religion, being intimately concerned in the event to which the text refers, ought to excite the most ardent prayers for its accomplishment.

This reflection ought to move us beyond a thousand other arguments. To love him with all the heart, and to prefer him before the dearest object on earth, is the characteristic of real Christians*. But the prayer of the petition is nothing else than the natural expression of this sentiment. If he appear, to the enlightened view of faith, supreme in excellence ; if he fill

* Matt. x. 37. Luke xiv. 26, 33.

an unrivalled throne in the affections of his redeemed people ; they cannot fail habitually to pray that he may occupy the highest place in the affections of all mankind. They will most earnestly desire that the Universe may perceive and acknowledge the excellence of their Redeemer's character and work. Do they behold him as the brightness of the father's glory, full of grace and truth ? do their souls adore him as the exalted God-man, who is all their Salvation and all their desire ? and can they forbear to wish and pray that all the world may view him in the same light ? My fellow Christians ! do we realize our strong, uncancellable obligations to his generous, his unspeakable love in our redemption, and will we, can we rest satisfied without the most enlarged desires, that every human being may experience the same grateful sensations with ourselves ? Is he not the chosen sovereign of our hearts which he has won by love and subdued by grace ? Has he not the justest title to that crown of praise which we have placed upon his head ? and shall we not habitually seek his exaltation, in the enlargement of his blessed kingdom in the world ? It is impossible that we should not be anxious that our glorious Lord may see of the travel of his soul and be satisfied : that the great objects for which he lived and suffered, and died, may be accomplished in their fullest extent. Surely then, we ought in daily prayer to supplicate in the Psalmist's words* " Gird thy sword upon thy thigh,

* Ps. xlv. 3, 4, 5.

“ O most mighty ! with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness : and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies ; whereby the people fall under thee.”

2. The peculiar excellence of this dispensation of grace ; and the incalculable benefits which result from it to mankind, is a consideration of great importance upon this subject.

The Gospel is a perfect system of truth and grace, and righteousness. There, all those doctrines in which rational creatures are interested and with which they ought to be acquainted, are plainly revealed. Jesus Christ is that divine teacher, that faithful and true witness who has manifested the nature, character, and government of God in the most perfect light. His Gospel unfolds the nature, the circumstances, the relations and the duties of man. It displays the origin, the progress, and the consummation of all things which relate to our spiritual and eternal state. It exhibits a just representation of our condition as accountable, guilty, depraved and ruined creatures.

It publishes the astonishing method of our restoration thro’ the intervention and atonement of God manifested in the flesh ; and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. It opens the treasures of divine grace ; displays them in all their fulness and freeness ; and states with clearness and precision the method of obtaining all saving blessings. It explains the nature of acceptable

worship, and teaches the way of access to the throne of grace. It unveils futurity and brings its amazing scenes to light. It establishes the immortality of the soul; the general resurrection of the dead and the eternal judgment. It points us to the glorious rewards of the righteous in the consummation of holiness and happiness forever; and denounces, in terms of awful import, the wrath of God which shall be revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

These are points of the utmost importance to creatures in our circumstances. They are points with regard to which the sages of antiquity, guided merely by the light of unaided reason, long labored with fruitless toil; but which are now clearly and satisfactorily settled by the authority of God himself in the divinely attested Gospel.

But if the Christian System be important on account of the truths which it communicates, it is no less valuable, as a system of duty and discipline for moral agents. In this respect it is complete; it tends to perfect human nature and prepare man for intercourse with his pure and holy Creator. No system of law, of Government, of philosophy, of religious, but human, institutions was ever so successful in producing moral good. They all rested comparatively in superficials; but this reaches the heart, at once, where all our conduct originates: it explores all its avenues; it furnishes those grand and forcible motives which excite our active powers; it furnishes the most perfect and extensive standard

of duty both with regard to piety and morality : And, it reveals the Almighty, invincible Spirit of the Lord, as an effectual agent prompting to duty and working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

When we contemplate the peculiar excellencies of this dispensation and justly appreciate its important advantages, we ought certainly to feel for the situation of those who are unacquainted with it. The Philanthropy of Christians will induce them to pray with importunity, and labor with exertion, that all mankind may share in the spiritual blessings which they enjoy. Grace enlarges the heart. It softens our rugged nature into generous compassion for human wretchedness. When Christians remember their former ignorance, and danger ; when they recollect the wormwood and the gall of that miserable state from which they have been delivered, they cannot but feel a sympathetic concern for those who are in similar circumstances. Surely they, cannot be insensible with regard to the condition of those perishing multitudes who still remain in the region and shadow of death from which they have escaped. With a mournful eye, they will often survey the immense valley of dry bones from which they have been raised ; and with anxious, aching hearts they will cry, “ come from the four winds O Breath and breathe upon these slain that they may live.*” They will experience the greatest anxiety that the blessings of the Gospel may be realized by those who are destitute of them : That the Gentiles who are

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* Ezek. xxxvii.

far from God may be brought nigh by the blood of Jesus ; that the universal corruption of the world may be subdued by the purifying spirit of grace, and that the holiness of the may Gospel supplant the abominable lusts of the carnal mind : that universal love and peace may prevail ; when “ the wolf and the lamb shall dwell together*” ; when all mankind as one band of ransomed brothers, united in love, “ shall have but one heart and one way†” ; and when “ they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God’s holy mountain‡”.

3. Consider how much our own happiness, spiritual prosperity and stability would be promoted by the event to which the prayer of the text refers.

Whilst the new nature which the Christian receives in Regeneration, feels the force of that motive which is derived from the glory of God our Savior ; whilst his social principles are influenced by a benevolent regard to human happiness in general ; our gracious Creator allows him also to pay a due regard to his own interest. This will be best ensured by the general prosperity of the Church. When multitudes embark in the same cause with ourselves, it inspires confidence ; it often produces emulous exertion, from the force of example ; it infuses alacrity. These and innumerable other advantages of society are experienced, when the Spirit of the Lord is pleased, as on the day of Pentecost, to enlarge the kingdom of the Redeemer, in any considerable degree, at a given time. It inspires the heart with unusual

* Is. xi. 6, † Jer. xxxii. 39. ‡ Is. xi. 9.

delight to witness the triumphs of the Cross. It stimulates the sincere disciples of Christ, to peculiar exertions in his cause, when they perceive a visible success attending the Gospel-ministry. A mutual communication of experiences in the Christian life, which is then very common, confirms and assists the members of the Church. Mistakes are often thus detected; the heart is moved by sympathy; it glows by the union of neighboring fires. Relieved from the irksome difficulty of single opposition to a hostile world; or a toilsome march thro' a lonely desert; the Christian is cheered by the countenance and society of multitudes engaged against the same spiritual enemies that he opposes, and who are travelling the same road to the heavenly Zion, which he has chosen. He is encouraged and strengthened; he holds on his way rejoicing; he runs without weariness and walks without fainting.

Since such are the advantages to our own souls, my Brethren, from the enlargement of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to the exercise of prayer for its accomplishment, by one of the strongest principles of human action. Let it be our constant petition, then, that the happy time may soon arrive, when "Zion's watchmen shall see eye to eye*"; when, according to the divine promise, "The inhabitants of One city shall go to another, saying, let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts†"; When "all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest.‡"

* II. lii. 8. † Zech. viii. 20. ‡ Heb. viii. 11.

4. Consider further, the encouragement which is held out in the promises of God, with regard to the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom. The prospect of success in any undertaking always invigorates exertion. When we are persuaded that our labor will not be in vain, we address ourselves to it with the utmost alacrity. Particularly, with how much confidence and satisfaction, do we ask of our friends those favors which we are assured, that they are ready to grant? Thus, therefore, the promises of God with regard to this point ought so to enliven the hopes and raise the expectations of Christians, as to excite to daily and fervent prayer for their accomplishment; nay, they ought to be made the very arguments which they will plead upon the occasion, and the grounds on which their faith will rely. So far from resting in an indolent security, because the faithfulness of God has engaged to accomplish what he has prescribed to himself and revealed to his people, as his determined purpose, real Christians are animated thereby with greater vigor in prayer. Far from resembling those proud & blind objectors, who weakly imagine that belief in the divine decrees, supercedes the necessity of active exertions in those who entertain it, they are by this very circumstance, engaged with greater earnestness in seeking the promised blessings. Whilst they are convinced, that all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus and shall surely be fulfilled, they believe it to be a part of the divine arrangement that "for all these things will God be enquired of by his people*". With David

* Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

they pray, “Remember the word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope*”. Like holy Daniel, who was inspired with resolution to pray for the restoration of Jerusalem, because the time expressly promised, for its accomplishment was arrived,† they plead the promise; their language is, “do as thou hast said”; “Be it unto the Church according to thy word”. The assurance which they derive from the divine promises, inspires them with fervor, strengthens their resolutions and enables them to rest upon the faithfulness of God.

How ought it, then, my Christian Brethren, to enlarge our hearts in the duty which is prescribed in the text, and to inspire us with hope and expectation, when we remember the extensive promises which are made, to Jesus as Mediator? Consider that though much has been accomplished, yet it is still far short of what we are warranted from the Scriptures, to expect. Shall we not be inspired with alacrity, then, to pray for the coming of Christ’s kingdom, when we read the following promises with regard to its enlargement? “He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied‡”: “Ask of me, and I will give thee, the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession§”: “I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth||”: “Behold I have given him for a witness to the people; a leader and commander to the people. Behold thou shalt call a nation that

* Ps. cxix. 49. † Dan. ix. 2, 3. ‡ Is. liii. 11.
§ Ps. ii. 8. || Is. xlix. 6.

thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee, shall run unto thee"*: "Sing and rejoice O daughter of Zion; for lo I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day†": "From the rising of the Sun, even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great amongst the Gentiles, and in every place, incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts‡"; "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever§".

5. Another consideration of the utmost weight arises from the express command of Christ himself. "After this manner" said Jesus, pray ye—thy kingdom come!" And shall not his venerable will be sacred to Christians? Will they not be ever ready to render him a prompt obedience? Let the slave, whose reluctant soul shrinks from the task which he hates, and from the tyrant who imposes it, refuse submission wherever he can hope to escape with impunity; but the language of your hearts, I trust, my brethren, will be very different. With your Lord, upon another occasion, you will cry, "To do thy will I take delight". With the declaration of the Apostle you will cheerfully agree, that "you are not your own, but bought with a price", therefore, to glorify your redeemer by discharging the duties which he prescribes, shall be the

* Is. lv. 4, 5. † Zech. ii. 10, 11. ‡ Mal. i. 11.
§ Rev. xi. 15.

unremitting study of your lives. You will recollect also, that the eternal God, by an inspired Prophet hath said, “Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, ’till he establish, and ’till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*.” “Ask of me things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands *command* ye me†”. Let the awful mandate of Jehovah arrest your attention and rouse you to activity: then, may we expect that “the set time to favor Zion may be come, when God’s servants, in obedience to his command, take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof‡”.

6. The last consideration which I shall suggest as an inducement to pray earnestly that Christ’s kingdom may come, is the prospect that arises from the present aspect of providence, and “the signs of the Times.” When we perceive by comparing the present state of the world with the predictions which have pointed to it, that the events so long expected by the most pious observers of the course of providence and the most judicious interpreters of the Scripture, are hastening on; it becomes us to co-operate by earnest prayer, with the other agencies which God is pleased to employ in accomplishing his designs. If the predictions of the inspired prophets led Daniel to seek their fulfilment, at the expected time, by importunity in prayer; if the devout Jews were induced, by the indications of providence, compared with the prophecies in their sacred books, to continue waiting at

* Is. lxii. 6, 7. † Is. xlv. 11. ‡ Ps. cii. 13, 14.

the temple, with continual supplication, for the manifestation of the long-expected Messiah; surely we, my brethren, may with great propriety be employed in the same exercise at the present period. Without entering here into a minute and useless detail of observations, let it be observed only, that an expectation, almost universal, has long been entertained in the Church, of prodigious increase, and remarkable purity as about to take place in the kingdom of Christ at the latter days, which are supposed to be now at hand. This expectation has been founded, chiefly, upon the predictions in the book of Revelations, confirmed and explained by the history of the world and the Church. Tho' such of them as relate to events which are yet to take place, be covered with the usual veil 'till the destined period of their accomplishment arrive; yet with regard to the rest, there appears to have been such a striking correspondence between them and certain important events to which they are supposed to refer, as to produce a remarkable coincidence of opinion amongst divines in making the application. In tracing this correspondence, between the prophecies and their accomplishment, the most judicious commentators have concluded, that the predicted period is at length nearly arrived*, in which the Antichristian cor-

* From a view and comparison of the scenes described in the book of Revelations, it appears probable, that the judgments of God, inflicted for a long succession of years, during the sounding of six out of the seven trumpets which denounced them, have been completed a very considerable time since; and therefore, that we may expect the events under the seventh trumpet, will soon be

ruptions and tyranny of Popery ; and the extraordinary influence of Mahometan delusion shall be effectually destroyed. The recent transactions on the Eastern continent seem to favor this opinion ; and we are animated with the hope that those great obstacles to the advancement of Christ's kingdom will be speedily removed.

When the triumphant wickedness and oppressions of these enemies to the truth, which have been so long mysteriously permitted to exist, shall be brought to a conclusion, then may we expect the rapid advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior. When God "by terrible things in righteousness is pouring out his wrath upon those enemies that have been often "drunk with the blood of the Saints," and unfolding those scenes that are to precede the happy time when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ," we may rejoice in the expectation that the day of redemption draweth nigh. Whilst we lament, on one hand, the fearful destruction of human beings which has taken place ; and the peace and prosperity of so many nations, fatally interrupted or ruined ; we may on the other, pierce the dark cloud with joyful faith, and discover a boundless prospect of universal liberty, universal reformation and universal peace. Trusting that the Almighty God will give a happy issue in favor of his Church, to the present commotions ; we ought to exercise ourselves to godliness, to steadfast hope and diligent prayer. What tho'

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fulfilled also. These are generally allowed to intend the destruction of Popery and Mahometanism.

* Infidelity be employed as the instrument to root out the deep rooted prejudices of superstition and delusion, God "will make the wrath of man to praise him", and cause the pure rays of Gospel-truth, to pervade the dark habitations of the earth. The convulsions in Europe are indeed terrible; thrones and kings, and kingdoms are rushing to their fate; the potshreds of the earth are dashed against each other to mutual destruction and the man of sin has fallen from his inviolable throne in the shock; but in the midst of all these revolutions, Christians in that hemisphere are watching, praying and, with united efforts, planning new measures for extending their master's kingdom. They are awaking as from a sleep of many generations. The spirit of primitive Christianity appears to revive in the Missionary business. Party spirit has become extinct in that important concern; and the pious, of various denominations and in very distant places, appear to act with an unanimity and concert before unknown. In our own country, a small portion of the same zeal and liberal Christianity has animated a number of the friends of Jesus Christ and of mankind. Our brethren of the New-York Missionary Society, composed of various denominations of Christians, have led the way in concerting common measures for extending the knowledge and the benefits of the

* The Vebabis in Arabia are a new sect of Infidels who appear to aim at the subversion of the Mahometan system of despotism and delusion: and French Atheists and Deists will probably accomplish the utter destruction of Popish superstition.

Gospel to our destitute frontiers, and the neighboring Savages. Is not all this an excitement to activity on our part, my brethren, proportioned to the magnitude of the object which is proposed to our view? And does it not hold out a prospect which ought to awaken a redoubled earnestness in prayer; and indeed in all other measures which are naturally connected with this duty, if we would be consistent with ourselves in using the petition contained in the text?

III. To point out those measures which will best demonstrate our sincerity in the practice of this duty, is the last thing which is proposed in the present discourse.

It is not enough that we wish and pray, we are also called to act, with vigor, a part, which shall shew that we are in earnest. We betray an appearance of insincerity if we beseech God to advance the Redeemer's kingdom, and yet contribute no active instrumentality towards it in our respective stations.

1. The first thing which I take the liberty to suggest, upon this subject, is, that we labor, with the utmost earnestness, to have those impediments corrected in ourselves, or entirely removed which have been already noticed as injurious to the interests of Christ's kingdom. I here take it for granted that we are in reality the willing subjects of that kingdom; because it would be a solecism in religion to suppose that we can be truly in earnest in our present undertaking without this. If then, we desire to pray consistently for the advancement of Christianity, and would demonstrate our sincerity in

this practice, we are bound to act, as becomes its privileged professors. We are bound, to express by our conduct before all the world, that we are deeply sensible of the importance of those objects which the Gospel reveals to our faith. For this purpose, it becomes us to awake from lethargy and negligence as to personal exercises in religion ; to renounce vanity and levity which are so very unsuitable to the ruinous condition of the world around us ; and to abstain not only from evil, but even from the appearance of evil. It becomes us to live daily by faith upon the son of God ; to realize the substance which he has revealed ; to act under a perception of the demonstration which he has given of things unseen ; and to maintain habitual intercourse with the throne of God's grace thro' him. It becomes us to cherish the habits of active righteousness ; to live soberly, righteously and godly in the present evil world ; to preserve consciences void of offence to God and man ; to be earnest, diligent, and persevering in attending to all duties. We ought to sacrifice partial and local views ; to disclaim all selfish purposes in our coalition ; to exalt our Savior only ; and to vie with each other principally in the degree of love and service which we will devote to him. In a word, practical Godliness is our profession and our business ; and we ought to be daily exercised in maintaining a watchful habit of it in the soul ; and in exhibiting before the world, the power and influence of the Cross of Christ.

2. It is our duty, by counsel, exhortation, and example, to endeavor to rescue as many of

our fellow creatures as possible from the dominion of sin and to prevail with them to devote themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we pray for the perishing world, and shall we, unconcerned, see them sinking into ruin before us? Rather shall we not be ready to warn every man, and bear a testimony for God against the sins of men?

Let those of us, then, who are Ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of his kingdom, labor in season and out of season; and preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God, as those who feel the weight of everlasting things; as those who believe the interesting truths which we preach to others. Let us renounce effeminacy, and be ashamed of indulging sloth and ease in the service of such a master and in promoting such a cause. Let us preach the simple truth of the Gospel; that is, Christ and him crucified; let us deny ourselves as to the reputation which we might derive from the meretricious ornaments of mere philosophy and that trick of words, which betrays rather a desire to shine, than to enforce truth upon the mind or glorify our Redeemer. Let us address the heart; let us never trifle with the most important of all subjects; nor speak with frigid apathy of those sublime truths which ought to fill the whole soul, and enforce a conviction of their divine original. Let the Gospel of Jesus our Master be the grand source from whence we shall derive our motives and arguments in preaching. Let us, with prudent, nay, if necessary, with stern inflexibility, exercise the discipline of his kingdom; and beware of

attempting to render the religion of Christ a pliant system, which will occasionally bend to suit the corrupt taste of wicked men. Let us never, never consider the Ministry of the Gospel as a mere mechanical business, to which the common maxims and practice of men may be applied; but let us view it in the awful light of a Savor of divine life or eternal death; as the power of God to the Salvation of those who believe, or his living testimony against his lost and impenitent foes. In a word, let us live as we preach; so that all may "take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus"; and that our example corresponding with our precepts, may be a continual admonition to the ungodly.

And let private Christians be active in their respective spheres with their families, friends and neighbors. Let them not be ashamed of the Cross, but bear it patiently and nobly, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Let them punctually and conscientiously attend to the means of preserving the Institutions of religion in their various departments and of supporting with vigor the purity of Christian discipline.

Let us all remember the example of Jesus and the labors of his Apostles and primitive disciples. Let us remember the character and conduct of those holy men, whom his love constrained; who saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth; and who therefore, burst thro' every difficulty for his sake. Let us follow the footsteps of those who through victorious faith overcame the world; confessed themselves pilgrims and strangers and counted not their property valuable, nor even

their lives dear, when their master's cause and interest was at stake.

3 In the last place, if we would demonstrate our sincerity in using this prayer, we should honestly and zealously unite and cheerfully co-operate with our fellow christians in pursuing extraordinary or peculiar measures for attaining its object. There cannot be a greater inconsistency, than to pray as many do, in their stated devotions, "thy kingdom come", and yet excite malignant opposition to every plan for extraordinary exertion in promoting its advancement. Therefore, let not pride; or party-spirit, or personal jealousies, or contentious humor be permitted to thwart the present coalition of Christians and their united endeavors to promote the interests of religion. What though every measure may not be exactly suited to our wishes; what though we may not all agree in certain circumstances of our religious profession; or, what though others may have led the way, before some of us, in attempting to excite the piety and zeal of their fellow Christians: should we on such accounts, refuse to aid in an attempt which evidently aims at supporting the cause of Christ? Should we refuse to unite with any, in lawful endeavors, who wish to see a crown of universal glory placed upon the Savior's head?

What a contemptible mind; nay, what a wicked mind must that professor of Christianity possess, who would labor to discourage even feeble exertions for promoting the kingdom of Christ! How malicious is the temper of those who call themselves Christians or Ministers, and yet oppose all those pious associations, which are

calculated to give energy to the means of diffusing Christian knowledge and to promote Union amongst divided brethren ! It is to be presumed, my Christian friends, that none of us will imbibe or cherish any portion of so rank a spirit of Satan. It is to be presumed that we will cordially co-operate, with all our fellow Christians, who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, in their laudable attempts to revive the spirit of Apostolic zeal and send the Gospel to all nations.

We cannot, it is true, embrace the whole world within the sphere of our labors, as we may wish in that of our wishes ; yet we may pursue such active measures as may be within our reach, to advance the Redeemer's kingdom ; we may be usefully employed in the instruction and reformation of a part of mankind. The destitute frontier settlements, and the savage Indian tribes, are are not only members of the same ruined race with ourselves, but they are our neighbors ; and their situation obtrudes itself more immediately upon our minds. Let us then attempt to secure their Salvation by leading them to Jesus, whose office it is to seek and save the lost. Those precious souls are perishing in countless numbers ; and the empire of sin seems to be established amongst them with unlimited sway. Let it be our noble ambition to counteract this dreadful influence. For this purpose, let us attempt to select pious and active disciples of our Lord, united in the great principles of his divine system and willing to endure hardships for the sake of extending his kingdom, whom we may employ as Missionaries to preach the Gospel amongst them. Let us search for men who are mortified to

the world and willing to put every thing to hazard for Christ's sake. Let us reject with honest indignation, the idea of maintaining useless drones, much less, worthless, vicious men in Missions, designed to convert the heathen and others almost as destitute of the means of religious knowledge, to the self-denial and holiness of the Gospel. Let us in this Evangelical business, beware of weak and vain attempts at pleasing the taste, or consulting the views of men of corrupt, carnal minds. Let us raise the necessary funds for supporting Missionaries, from the contributions of the pious and liberal ; reminding all Christians, that their Master, tho' rich, yet for their sakes became poor ; and that to offer freely of their substance in promoting his cause, is the least which they can do as an expression of their gratitude. Let it be our grand, habitual object as Christians, to promote the glory of God ; and in consulting this, let us endeavor to spread the kingdom of righteousness, and peace, amongst the poor and destitute who are ready to perish in their sins, on our frontiers, and in the uncultivated forests of America. In the good providence of God the Institution of this Society is proposed, for accomplishing this benevolent purpose. Every pious heart must wish well to a coalition of Christians in such a cause, and contribute towards the attainment of its object. Perhaps the temporal and eternal happiness of millions of God's rational creatures may be connected with the success of this Institution ; and shall any feeling heart withhold its countenance and aid ! Neither our exertions, nor our success may be great, at first ; yet at length they may

exceed all present calculation ; and the salvation of God be sent, thro' our agency, to the ends of the earth. God will raise, and qualify instruments for carrying into effect his gracious purposes ; and will engage proper patrons of his glorious cause. Let us beseech him to honor us so far as to give us a place amongst these ; and inspire us with the Spirit of such a service.

I conclude with offering up my vows to God, for the prosperity of this Society and the encouragement of the Church of Christ thro' its exertions. May a success transcending our most sanguine expectations be the fruit of our counsels and our prayers ! May the happy period soon approach when the heathen shall become the heritage of Jesus and the uttermost parts of the earth, his sure possession !
Amen.

F I N I S.